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ABSTRACT

Noting that students whose parents and other significant adults are actively involved in their learning are more likely to be successful in school, this paper examines eight parent and community involvement models and discusses selected strategies for initiating plans for school restructuring related to parent involvement. Models of parent involvement are identified as useful in representing in the range and type of activities that might be incorporated in parent involvement programs and can be used as a framework for developing, evaluating, and redesigning parent involvement programs in schools. Considered in this paper are: (1) Gordon's systems approach; (2) the Systems Development Corporation study; (3) Berger's role categories; (4) Chavkin and Williams' parent involvement role; (5) Honig's early childhood education model; (6) Jones' levels of parent involvement; (7) Epstein's typologies; and (8) language minority parents involvement approach. The paper also discusses selected strategies for initiating plans for restructuring in the area of parent involvement, including developing a center on families partnership, establishing parent centers, investigating the accelerated schools movement, developing parent cooperatives, creating new options for parents, and focusing on families, technology, and the schools. The paper concludes with a discussion of the positive impact of research into the benefits of family and community involvement on national educational policies over the past decade, on states' efforts to encourage involvement, and on teacher education programs. (Contains 78 references.) (KB)

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Parent Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement

The importance of effective parent involvement in school has been identified as a critical factor in the academic success of students (Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, Miller-Johnson, 2000; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). It appears that parents who have high expectations for their children's achievement (Gottfried & Gottfried, 1989; Marjoribanks, 1988; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Seginer, 1983, 1986; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1988), participate in school activities (Epstein, 1985; Linney & Vernberg, 1983; Stevenson & Baker, 1987), offer encouragement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Holloway & Hess, 1982; Sigel, 1982; Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Lummis, Sigler, Fan, & Ge, 1990), and provide positive home learning environments (Epstein, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Stevenson & Baker, 1987) influence the pupils' academic achievement. This research has been supplemented by studies that have shown that well planned activities and outreach can increase involvement even among families considered hard to reach, such as low income, minority, and single-parent families (Epstein, 2001). Such research has helped to refine family and community involvement strategies and has led to a number of practical approaches to improve the school's capacity to build meaningful partnership programs (Sanders, Allen-Jones, & Abel, 2002).

MODELS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Jerold Bauch (1994) developed a category system to classify or describe ways parents are or should be involved in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. The value of a model or category system is in representing the range and type of activities that might be incorporated in parent involvement programs. These categories can be used by school personnel as a framework for developing, evaluating,

and redesigning parent involvement programs in schools. Eight parent involvement models will be discussed in this section: Gordon's Systems Approach, the Systems Development Coorporation (SDC) study, Berger's Role Categories, Chavkin and Williams' Parent Involvement Roles, Honig's Early Childhood Education Model, Jones' Levels of Parent Involvement, Epstein's Typologies, and language minority parents involvement approach.

Gordon's Systems Approach

Ira Gordon (1979) developed a useful way of describing parent involvement. His categories are based on the institutions that would be influenced by the involvement. Gordon described four levels of parent involvement in his social systems model. The microsystem, the child and family, is strongly influential on the development and school success of the child but requires enormous effort and energy to change. The mesosystem is the neighborhood institutions such as schools, recreation, stores, etc. The nature and quality of these affect the family and the child in less direct ways. The exosystem consists of an examination of local policies. For example, family leave policy of employers, the availability of social services from a community agency, etc. have an influence on the quality of family life. The macrosystem, Gordon's final system, represents the major social, economic, and political aspects of the larger society. In Gordon's view, changes at this level have the potential for affecting large numbers of children and families.

Gordon's (1979) systems model creates a paradox of priorities for parent involvement programs. Should a school plan a series of one-on-one conferences with each parent concerning effective child management strategies or spend a comparable amount of time helping a community agency develop neighborhood

support groups for abusive parents? Would it be better to conduct a Saturday workshop on family literacy for a few parents or write a brochure on the importance of literacy that can be disseminated to all parents in the school district?

Another set of Gordon's (1979) categories narrows the focus to roles that parents can or should play when they interact with schools. These role categories are: teach own child, decision maker, classroom volunteer, paraprofessional, adult educator, and adult learner. These roles would have multiple impacts. The parent would be influenced and so would others who have contact with family members. According to Gordon, this is the ultimate transaction - all gain from the association.

The SDC Study

System Development Corporation (SDC), a California-based research firm, conducted a large scale study of parent involvement categories (Lyons, Robbins, & Smith, 1983). Fifty-seven projects, supported by several federal grants, were studied to determine how parents were actually involved in schools. The researchers found several practices, which fell into six categories: home-school relations, home-based instruction, school support, instruction at school, parent education, and advisory groups.

The SDC categories, derived from a large sample of programs with parent involvement components, constitute a solid description of the status of parent involvement in the 1970s. Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and its reauthorization - Improving America' s School Act of 1994 - most federally-funded projects mandate parent involvement. Project guidelines often specify the kinds of parent involvement required. For example, Title I (Chapter 1), Follow Through, and others require parent advisory groups. There had been few

precedents for involving parents in such collaborative roles before these rules were imposed on schools using federal funds. SDC confirmed that parents were being involved effectively in their six categories. Many of the expectations for federal programs continue to use the range of activities described in the SDC study.

Berger's Role Categories

Eugenia Hepworth Berger, in her popular book *Parents* as *Partners in Education*, presents six roles that parents can or should play in their involvement with their child's school. They include: parents as teachers of their own children, parents as spectators, parents as employed resources, parents as temporary volunteers, parents as volunteer resources, and parents as policymakers.

There is considerable overlap in Berger's (1991) roles and those of Gordon (1979). The Berger categories focus on what parents might do at home, at school, and in other institutions. Absent from Berger's categories is a focus on parent education, present in Gordon's list. Berger's roles are descriptive of activities that exist in the traditional school. In her book, Berger describes additional activities and relationships that can build the home-school partnership.

Chavkin and Williams' Parent Involvement Roles

Nancy Feyl Chavkin and David Williams (1993) surveyed 2,967 parents in order to determine their interest in various school involvement roles. They asked parents to rank their interest in the following seven roles: paid school staff, audience, decision maker, program supporter, advocate, home tutor, and co-learner.

The data were analyzed according to parent ethnicity. Chavkin and Williams (1993) found strong similarities among all groups (Anglo, African American, and

Hispanic) in the top three rankings: audience, home tutor, and program supporter. The categories that were ranked lower in interest by all parents in the survey were the less traditional roles: decision maker, advocate, colearner, and paid school staff. The only differences found among racial groups was in minority parents' greater interest in paid roles. Chavkin and Williams concluded that parents were interested in all seven roles, and that their overall interest in parent involvement in schools was high.

Honig's Early Childhood Education Model

Much of the current interest in parent involvement began in research done with early childhood education programs (Lunenburg, 2000a). Alice Honig (1990) classified the kinds of parent involvement efforts reported in the literature. Her seven categories include: home visitation (a staff member works with parents in their homes); parent group meetings (usually for parent education purposes); home visits for interagency linkages (the Home Start model); program-articulated home visits (for parents of children enrolled in preschool programs); parents as teachers (sharing duties in cooperative preschools or for parent education purposes); home follow-up on television viewing (based on "Sesame Street" or special-purpose TV programs); and omnibus programs (designed for total education, health, and social service effect on the entire family).

As with many early childhood education programs, the activities described by Honig (1990) include a heavy emphasis on learning opportunities for parents. The general role for parents with very young children was that of learner. Activities were designed to provide information, knowledge, and skill to these parents.

Jones' Levels of Parent Involvement

Bruce Jones (1989) described parent involvement in schools in four levels. Jones does not consider his levels as hierarchical.

Level 1: Traditional. This level includes parent-teacher association meetings and volunteer fund-raising,

Level 2: Receives Information. This involves newsletters or other means of communication with parents about students, budget, curriculum and instruction, and other school and classroom activities.

Level 3: Involvement at School. This area involves paid volunteers for a variety of school activities, such as tutoring, hall monitors, cafeteria helper, chaperoning, and advisory group membership.

Level 4: Decision Making. The activities associated with level 4 include direct participation in hiring faculty and staff, curriculum development, budgeting, and program evaluation.

The Jones (1989) levels were used as a framework in a study of half of the school districts in Indiana sponsored by the Lilly Middle Grades Improvement Project (MGIP). Most schools had examples of parent involvement in level 1. Many MGIP schools had some forms of level 2 and 3 involvement. No schools had pure level 4 participation (Jones, 1993). While Jones' levels were not hierarchical, levels 1, 2, and 3 are traditional programs planned by teachers in which parents play a passive role in school activities. In the first three Jones' levels, there is no implied partnership between parents and school personnel. Only in level 4 do parents have joint roles to play where their participation can influence directly school programs and practices.

Epstein's Typologies

Joyce Epstein (1985, 1987, 1995, 2001) and her colleagues with the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning at Johns Hopkins University provide a departure from the descriptive categories for parent involvement in schools found in other models. The researchers were concerned that these early status studies did not provide much insight into what schools might do to encourage more extensive parent involvement (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Connors,1994). Epstein (1995) presented six typologies of parent involvement, which was the basis of the National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA) standards for family involvement, adopted in 1997. These typologies are a major construct of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. The research-based framework identifies non-hierarchical types of involvement for which schools can implement activities to reach a variety of goals for student achievement and school improvement (Epstein, Sanders, Salinas, Simon, Van Voorhis, & Jansorn, in press). The types of involvement are the following.

Type 1: Parenting

This refers to schools helping to improve parents' understanding of adolescent development, parenting skills, and the conditions at home for learning. The school also seeks to improve its own understanding of the families of its students. Activities and ideas in the trust funds of the six schools include home visits, family support groups, referrals for special services, social services, providing information to parents about teens, and providing parenting skills for teen parents.

Type 2: Communicating

This refers to the basic obligations of schools to improve the communications from school to home and from home to school about school programs and students' progress, including the use of letters, memos, report cards, newsletters, conferences, and other mechanisms. Activities and ideas include easing the transition to high school (orientation letters, tours for middle-grade students, summer and fall orientations for students and parents), holding back-to-school nights, signing pledges/contracts with parents, using phone and mail communications (including newsletters), holding conferences, providing information on school policies and programs.

Type 3: Volunteering

This refers to the involvement in school of parent and community volunteers, and the involvement of parents and others who come to the school to support and watch student performances, sports, and other events. School practices and ideas include volunteer activities (parents help other parents, call about attendance, talk about their careers, mentor students), and increasing family attendance at school events.

Type 4: Learning at Home

This refers to improving family involvement in learning activities at home, including involvement in homework, classwork, and curricular-related interactions and decisions. Activities and ideas include helping parents to help students set goals and select courses, providing college information, and conducting career transition programs.

Type 5: Decision Making

This refers to parents and other community residents in advisory, decision-making, or advocacy roles in parent associations, advisory committees, and school

improvement or school site councils. It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that work for school improvement. The six schools' activities and ideas include creating more active parent organizations, and increasing the number of parents, students, and community members on advisory and decision-making groups.

Type 6: Collaborating with the Community

This refers to involvement of any of the community organizations or institutions that share some responsibility for children's development and success. School activities and ideas include community involvement in school-linked health care programs, delineating a clear role for families in business-school partnerships, offering workshops at school about community resources, and informing families about students' community service activities and requirements.

The Epstein (1995) typologies have become the organizing construct around a continuous program of research on parent involvement in schools. The recent Epstein typologies of the 1990s and the SDC studies of the 1970s and 1980s can be combined to provide an integrated framework for developing, evaluating, and redesigning parent involvement programs in the schools.

Language Minority Parents Involvement

It is necessary for language minority parents to be involved in their children's education for reinforcement of native language development and for communication of high expectations and emotional support regarding academic achievement (Crawford, 1989; Lunenburg & Irby, 1999). In a report by Lara-Alecio, Irby, and Ebener (1997), supportive parental behaviors or practices were determined to fall into three broad

categories associated with high-achieving children of low-income, educationally disadvantaged, Hispanic parents. The three categories were: having high expectations, having a firm belief in the educational system, and having a desire to be linked with the school.

High Expectations

The supportive behaviors in this category indicated that parents reported to (1) set high expectations for completion of school, (2) connect education with success, (3) express a desire and act to further their own education, and (4) act as a role model in acquiring an education.

Belief in Education

The parents exhibited 22 behaviors that indicated a belief in and support of the educational system. Their homes were images of the school. They emphasized the importance of reading (Lunenburg, 1999), read with their children, conducted storytelling sessions, played school with their children, provided problems for solving, acted as an encourager, demonstrated a caring attitude, structured time, established limits, provided feedback, reinforced successes through rewards, taught children to write, monitored television viewing, taught social skills, taught good manners, assisted with math and projects, provided books and arts and crafts materials, exposed children to different learning experiences, provided emotional support, allowed children to make choices, and restricted leisure time activity for misbehavior.

Parents as a Home/School Link

Parents were found to play a major role in the home/school link. Parents stayed informed about their child's education. They solicited information about school from

their children, participated in school activities, took a leadership role in school organizations, volunteered in classrooms, met teachers early in the year, helped in solving problems at school with their children, attended parent/teacher conferences, and interacted with their children about their day at school.

APPLYING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE:

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The literature is replete with programs that have been effective at increasing parent involvement in schools. We will discuss a few selected strategies for initiating plans for restructuring in the area of parent involvement. The strategies span all grade levels from preschool to high school.

Strategy 1: Consider Developing a Center on Families Partnership

Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, Sanders, Salinas, Simon, Van Voorhis, & Jansorn, in press) have implemented a program developed by the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning (Center on Families) in Baltimore high schools. The researchers provide a list of basic practices based on the six Epstein (1995) typologies presented earlier (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Connors, 1994; Hollifield, 1995).

Type 1 - School Help for Families

Develop a lasting set of workshops on key issues in adolescent development. This could be a videotaped series, developed with the help of a local cable company, community or technical college, or the high school's media department. The guidance office could take leadership for these activities, working with the Action Team, perhaps using the tapes as a forum for a parent workshop series. The tapes can be made available

to families through the school, the library, or for free at local video stores on a checkout basis.

Type 2 - School-Home Communication

Include students in parent-teacher conferences. Develop one-page guidelines for parents and teens to prepare for the conference. The guidelines would help parents and teens identify common concerns, interests, and talents to discuss with teachers during the conference. The conference could also focus on students' goals and how the teacher and parent could better assist the student.

Type 3 - Family Help for Schools

One member of the Action Team or a parent and teacher as co-chairs could coordinate parent and community volunteers with school and teacher needs for help. Encourage many to participate by allowing work to be done at home or at school, on the weekends, or before/after regular school hours. Encourage teachers to be creative in their requests for assistance so that the many skills and interests of parents and community members can be tapped.

Type 4 - Involvement in Learning Activities at Home

Design interactive homework that requires students to talk to someone at home about something interesting that they are learning in class or about important school decisions. The homework activity is the student's responsibility, but a parent or other family or community member is used as a reference source or audience for the student. This enables students to share ideas at the same time that families are informed about the students' curricula and learning activities.

Type 5 - Involvement in Governance, Decision Making, and Advocacy

Invite parents and students to become members of school committees or councils to review curriculum or specific school policies. In order to encourage diverse representation, ask a more experienced parent or student leader to be a "buddy" to a less experienced parent or student.

Type 6 - Collaboration and Exchanges with the Community

Develop a community resource directory, perhaps in cooperation with the school nurse, or with a member of the chamber of commerce or other group, which gives parents and students information on community agencies that can help with health issues, job training, and summer or part-time employment for teens, and other areas of need for families and students.

Strategy 2: Consider the Establishment of Parent Centers

The establishment of parent centers in schools has been gaining momentum in the past 10 years (Johnson, 1994). However, the program has gone largely unnoticed and undocumented amidst such school reform movements as restructuring, site-based management, choice, and others (Lunenburg, 1995). Parent centers represent a profound change in the way educators view the role of parents in schools and the way parents view their role in the education of their children.

Parent and family centers have great potential for increasing or improving parent involvement in the schools. They are typically specific locations within the school building where parents gather to decide how they will become involved in the school. Many parents take ownership of the centers, a place where there is no interference by school administrators, who instead provide support. Parents invite

teachers, other school personnel, and children into the centers to collaborate with them.

It may be useful to examine parent/family center activities using as a framework Epstein's (1995) six typologies of parent involvement (Connors & Epstein, 1994; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein & Connors, 1994; Hollifield, 1995):

1. School help for families (responsibility for health, safety, and development);
2. School-home communication (responsibility for communicating with families)
3. Family help for schools (serving as volunteers assisting teachers, administrators, and children);
4. Family involvement in learning activities at home (involvement with homework, classwork, and curricular-related interactions and decisions);
5. Family involvement in governance, decision making, and advocacy (involvement in parent associations, advisory committees, or school site councils);
6. Family collaboration and exchanges with the community (involvement with community organizations that share responsibility for children's development).

Most parent and family center activities fall in categories one, two, three, and five (Johnson, 1994).

Strategy 3: Investigate the Accelerated Schools Movement

By the mid-1990s, the accelerated schools movement involved over 500 schools in more than 30 states (St. John, 1995). The project of accelerated schools grew to reach about 1,000 elementary and middle schools in 1997-1998 in almost 40 states and with 13 regional centers (Research Background on Accelerated Schools,

1998). Furthermore, numerous teams in universities, school districts, and state departments of education have been trained to facilitate the accelerated schools change process. The accelerated schools process is a systematic, locally based school-restructuring methodology that has had some success at involving various constituencies of the school community (Finnan, 1996). Accelerated schools explicitly involve parents as partners in the change process (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993). The accelerated schools process was originally conceived as a way of transforming schools that serve students in at-risk situations (Levin, 1987).

Whereas the accelerated schools method provides a systematic process for setting visions, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the schools, and reorganizing to move the school toward the visions (Finnan, 1996; Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993), it does not prescribe the areas the school should address, either in their vision or in their reorganization, although an emphasis is placed on parents' involvement in the training literature (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993). Each of the schools organized cadres (teams of teachers and possible others in the school community) to focus on improving parent and community involvement in the schools. Thus each of the schools had, by the end of its first year in the accelerated schools process, an organizational mechanism for systematically working on ways of facilitating parent involvement in the school. These cadres had been working to improve parental involvement.

Strategy 4: Develop Parent Cooperatives

Parent cooperatives, typically characteristic of early childhood education programs, are generally recognized as a significant way to improve the education of all children (Katz, 1994). Parent involvement in schools has always been a central feature of

Head Start (Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, Miller-Johnson, 2000), Follow Through, Title I (Chapter 1), and other programs.

In the early days of parent cooperatives, parents - usually mothers - worked in co-op programs a few hours a week, assisting a teacher with many of the daily class activities. Teachers offered weekly evening parent-education classes to help parents to learn to work with children in the classroom and to support parents in child-rearing roles. Like some parent centers of today, many parent co-ops were owned and funded by a parent organization.

Although parent cooperatives still remain in the United States and other countries, the increasing numbers of mothers employed has resulted in a substantial decrease in the numbers of parent co-ops (Katz, 1994; Shaw, 1992; Taylor, 1967). The national commitment to parent involvement (Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994) and concern for the welfare of families suggest that it is time once again to create ways to adapt parent co-ops to the needs of today's working parents.

Strategy 5: Consider Focusing on Families, Technology, and the Schools

Around the country, schools that are participating in Challenge Grants or Title VII Comprehensive Grant Programs are focusing resources on minority or non-English speaking families. Two examples of successful parent involvement programs are provided.

Example 1. Project ExCITE (Expanded Community Involvement in Technology and Education)

The principal, school technology coordinator, PTA president, teacher team leaders, EvenStart parents, and family resource coordinator jointly defined three

objectives for Project ExCITE:

1. To provide parents the opportunity to better understand Kentucky instruction by participating in hands-on technology supported learning activities with their children
2. To increase parental awareness of available technology
3. To provide training to parents and community adults in basic computer skills.

The project has two activity strands: family learning and adult computer training.

ExCITE nights welcome parents to school to participate in learning with their children. In these two hour sessions students teach parents through hands-on learning, demonstrating on-line research, computer animation, multimedia authoring, and hypermedia. On five Saturdays, Cane Run (KY) students, parents, and community members are invited to school to "hit the information highway" for a mini-vacation. Using the network families explore global telecommunications. Teachers will be "travel agents;" students are "tour guides." After their "vacation," families create "souvenirs" from their journey using the writing and publishing center. The program targets 50 families.

Additionally, the program targets 25 adults from the community and provides eight, three-hour sessions in basic computer skills. Four local businesses joined as partners in this adult training project and sent staff to talk about computer skills needed in the business world: Rohm Haas of Kentucky, United Parcel Service, Zoller Corporation, and Baptist Hospitals. The business partners host visits to their facilities so that the participants may see technology in the workplace (Crab Orchard Elementary, Lincoln

County Schools, 1997, http://www.kde.state.ky.us/new/grants.html).

Example 2. Saturday School at Sammons

Saturday School at Sammons (SSS) was located in an urban school district and was funded by a Title VII Bilingual grant and was fully supported by the elementary school campus administration team. The program ran ten consecutive weekends for three hours every Saturday morning each semester for two years under the grant. One-half of the parents attended an English as a second language (ESL) class for an hour and a half, then moved to a hands-on computer class for the remaining time. The other half of the parents began with computer classes and then switched to ESL. The elementary students had semi-structured learning activities during the morning sessions.

Besides the basic English skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and learning how to better assist their children, the parents also learned how to write a résumé in Spanish and English and how to fill out a job application in English. The skills were incorporated into the ESL classes and the computer literacy classes (Irby, LeCompte, & Lara-Alecio, 1997). This parent involvement model has been transferred to five other school sites in the Houston, Texas, metropolitan area.

Strategy 6: Create New Options for Parents

We are witnessing an explosion of interest in creating new options for public education and giving parents the power to choose from among them (O'Neil, 1996). Choice programs in the United States include: magnet schools, alternative schools, charter schools, interdistrict and intradistrict choice, vouchers, open enrollment, back-to-basics schools, technology academics, home schooling, and others (Lunenburg, 2000b). By having choice, parents are likely to become more involved in the school they have

chosen for their child than they would be if it had been assigned by school officials.

From the aforementioned list of new options for public schools, four approaches to choice that are currently receiving a great deal of attention are: magnet schools, charter schools, interdistrict and intradistrict choice, and vouchers. Each one will be discussed in turn.

Magnet Schools

In recent years, magnet schools have proliferated in urban areas as a result of their role in desegregation efforts (Gamoran, 1996; Steel & Levine, 1994). Moreover, many individual magnet schools and a few magnet programs have existed for some time (Elmore, 1990; Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Waldrip, 2001).

Magnet schools take many forms. On the one hand, they may have a unique programmatic focus, such as science or the performing arts. On the other hand, they may offer a more limited specialization, such as health care or computers, within an otherwise traditional curriculum (Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Witte, 1990). Typically, magnet schools draw students from within an entire school district.

Magnet schools can provide a better match between the curriculum and the interests of students and teachers. They often achieve positive school climates, strong leadership, cohesiveness, and sound working relationships. However, magnet schools can also create problems in a public school district. Selective magnets can become elitist schools selecting the top students from other schools and weakening academic balances. In addition, costly extra paperwork and teacher in-service may drain resources from other schools (Esposito, 1990).

How successful are urban magnet schools? Do they promote higher achievement?

Using data compiled by the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) (Ingels et al., 1992), Adam Gamoran (1996) compared student achievement in 48 magnet schools, 213 comprehensive public high schools, 57 Catholic schools, and 39 secular private schools, for a total of about 24,000 students. Achievement was measured in four subjects: mathematics, science, reading, and social studies.

Gamoran found large achievement differences among the four types of high schools. Students in both types of private schools (Catholic and secular) outperformed students in public schools. The lowest achievement in all four subjects occurred in the comprehensive public schools. James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer (1986) reported similar results using a national sample of some 40,000 students. Magnet schools were not part of the Coleman and Hoffer study, however.

Gamoran noted that the achievement differences found in his study could be misleading, because different types of students attend the different types of schools. In particular, Gamoran found that white students and those of higher socioeconomic status were overrepresented in private schools and underrepresented in public magnet schools as compared to public comprehensive schools. Therefore, the question arose: To what extent were the achievement differences due to differences among the students and to what extent were they due to differences in types of schools?

When the sample was controlled statistically for students' prior achievement, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, most of the achievement differences between public and private schools disappeared. Moreover, in public magnet schools, achievement was higher than that in public comprehensive schools in all four subjects. In science, reading, and social studies, these differences were statistically significant.

Gamoran concluded that this indicates that most of the original differences resulted from different types of students, not from different types of schools.

Charter Schools

The charter school movement is one of the fastest growing education reforms (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). In 1991, for example, Minnesota became the first state to pass a law allowing charter schools. California followed suit a year later. By the end of 1996, 25 states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws (American Federation of Teachers, 1996) and by the year 2000, that number increased to 36 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia (O'Neil, 2001). At the federal level, Congress passed legislation, as part of Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, authorizing grants to support states' charter school efforts.

Although charter school policies vary, they generally share the following features (Nathan, 1996). In some states, charter schools may be released from district policies and state codes regarding curriculum, instruction, budget, and personnel. In others, schools may apply to waive state and district requirements on a rule-by-rule basis. In return, charter schools must meet agreed upon performance goals and show results – for example, by participating in state-mandated testing programs, mastering statewide curriculum structures, and the like.

Charter schools are created through a written, formal agreement between a group of individuals (certified or non-certified teachers, parents, etc.) or organizations (an existing public school, private school, nonprofit or for-profit agencies/firms) and a sponsoring body (e.g., a local school board of education). The requirements for acquiring a charter are dependent on the authorizing state legislation. Charter schools receive public

funding, usually based on student enrollment.

The first national evaluation of charter schools since the movement began in 1991 was released by the U. S. Department of Education (1997). It is the first part of a four-year study of charter schools. A more recent assessment of the charter school movement was conducted by Murphy and Shiffman (2002). Researchers reported that charter schools tend to be smaller than conventional public schools, serve about the same proportion of minority children, and face serious financial barriers. Furthermore, the study found no evidence that charter schools select the more desirable students from the overall student population. In Massachusetts, Michigan, and Minnesota, charter schools actually enrolled higher percentages of minority students than did the conventional public schools in those states. Moreover, the study found that many charter schools develop their mission around the needs of at-risk or Limited English-Proficient (LEP) students. Also, the report found no evidence of discrimination against disabled students, which refutes accusations that charter schools are excluding disabled students (McKinney, 1996). The report lacks data concerning whether charter schools are performing better than conventional public schools. This phase of the research will be part of the longer four-year study forthcoming.

Interdistrict and Intradistrict Choice

Magnet schools and charter schools are forms of intradistrict choice (Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Witte, 1990). This means that parents can select from among schools or schools-within-schools in a public school district. Among the most successful intradistrict models now in place are in Montclair, New Jersey and Cambridge, Massachusetts. These programs have resulted in greater parental involvement in schools and expanded

academic leadership by teachers. Community District 4 in New York City has developed an outstanding system of choice using a wide selection of schools, several of which are housed within a single building (Esposito, 1990).

The first interdistrict model was initiated in Minnesota in 1987. Several states have adopted similar policies. Interdistrict programs extend the range of choices by enabling parents to send their children to public schools outside of the district in which they reside (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992). In some states, students have unrestricted choice among public schools. In other states, some restrictions are placed on students' ability to select from among public schools. For example, because of its rapid population growth, Washington has not been able to grant all interdistrict requests. In Minnesota and Alabama, students' interdistrict choices are restricted by desegregation plans in some school districts (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1992; Witte, 1990).

Vouchers

Vouchers were first proposed over thirty years ago (Friedman, 1962). Although the original proposals and recent voucher bills have died in several state legislative sessions, vouchers continue to surface as a topic of discussion regionally and nationally. Many Republican leaders have indicated strong support for private school vouchers. This political climate, coupled with recent developments in the only two states with private school vouchers (Ohio and Wisconsin), has resurrected voucher programs as an instrument of parental choice.

Voucher programs allow parents to put tax dollars toward a private education. This would take the form of a subsidy to the chosen school. The dollar value of a

voucher is usually equal to or less than the state average per pupil expenditure, and may cover the full or partial cost of a private school tuition.

Voucher plans vary in design. Some limit the number of students or specify a category of students eligible for vouchers (e.g., at-risk students, minorities, etc.), while others may have no restrictions. Most voucher plans have the following requirements: participation in state testing programs, compliance with civil rights laws, and certified teachers. A growing number of voucher proposals would allow religious schools to receive vouchers (Yamashiro and Carlos, 1995).

Wisconsin was the first state to approve a private school voucher program in 1990. Attempts in 1995 to expand the Milwaukee School Choice Program to include private religious schools have been halted by an injunction sought by the ACLU and the Milwaukee teachers union. In the mean time, two independent studies released recently differ in their conclusions about student achievement. One, conducted by the University of Wisconsin (Newmann, 1996) showed mixed results and no significant gains in test scores, while the other study, conducted by researchers from Harvard University and the University of Houston, found that students enrolled in voucher programs for three years or more scored from 3 to 12 percentage points higher in reading and mathematics than their comparison group (Engels, et al., 1997).

In 1996, Ohio became the second state to approve vouchers for church-sponsored schools. The program, however, was delayed in the courts until a judge ruled recently that the public funding of religious schools did not violate state or federal constitutions. While the pilot voucher program in Cincinnati is operating, an appeal is underway. In 2002, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Cleveland voucher case that endorses

the use of public money to support private education. Despite the court's ruling in this particular case, the fact remains: *the best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen public schools* (Montecel, 2002)

Conclusion

Research on family and community involvement has demonstrated that students whose parents and significant other adults are actively involved in their learning are more likely to be successful in school (Sanders, Allen-Jones, Abel, 2002). Different types of family and community involvement have been shown to result in student success in school, including positive attitudes toward school, better attendance and behavior in school, higher rates of homework completion, and better achievement in academic subjects. This research has been supplemented by studies that have shown that well planned activities can increase parent and community involvement even among traditionally hard to reach families, including low income, minority, and single-parent families (Epstein, 2001). Such research has helped to refine family and community involvement strategies that have resulted in practical approaches to improve the school's capacity to develop meaningful partnership programs.

The term "school, family, and community partnerships" is a better term than "parent involvement," for it recognizes schools as equals in the partnership and also encompasses the influence of all family members and of the many social and geographical communities that provide a context for the student's academic life (Sanders, Allen-Jones, & Abel, 2002). Eight parent and community involvement approaches were examined in this paper: Gordon's systems approach, the SDC study, Berger's role categories, Chavkin and Williams' parent involvement roles, Honig's early childhood

education model, Jones" levels of parent involvement, Epstein's typologies, and language minority parents involvement approach. The value of a model or category system, such as the aforementioned approaches, is in representing the range and type of activities that might be incorporated in a school parent involvement program.

Many different partnership programs can be implemented to foster each of the eight parent and community involvement approaches. There is no one-size-fits-all approach that schools can choose. Partnership programs implemented by schools should reflect site-based goals for revitalization and student success. Four effective partnership programs were examined in this paper: the Center on Families program, parent centers, accelerated schools movement, and parent cooperatives. The aforementioned partnership programs can be used by school leaders as frameworks for designing their own parent involvement approaches tailored to their own individual schools/school districts.

We are experiencing an explosion of interest in new options for public education and giving parents the power to choose from among them. Choice programs in the United States include: magnet schools, alternative schools, charter schools, interdistrict-intradistrict choice, vouchers, open enrollment, traditional schools, technology academics, single-sex schools, home schooling, and others.

Choice programs are highly diverse in structure. Some allow parental selection among existing schools as they are, while others recast schools to provide specific curricular emphasis. Four approaches to choice that are currently receiving a great deal of attention reflect this variation: magnet schools, charter schools, interdistrict/intradistrict choice, and vouchers and were discussed in this paper.

Research on the benefits of family and community involvement has had a positive

effect on national policies during the past decade. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994, for example, identified eight national goals for public schools. One of these goals, Goal 8 states:

> Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (p.15)

Linked to Goals 2000 was the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Among other things, this reauthorization strengthened the family involvement component of Title I, which seeks to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of poor children. The reauthorization of Title I mandated that school-level family involvement policies include parent/school agreements designed to clarify the goals, expectations, and shared responsibilities of schools and parents as partners in students' education. Such agreements were intended to be helpful frameworks for discussions between schools and parents about how to encourage better student performance in school. And, recently, "Title V Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs" of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 contains numerous provisions for school, family, and community involvement in students' learning.

States have developed standards to encourage greater family and community involvement in schools. Key educational reform groups, such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have developed standards pertaining to parent and community

involvement in schools. Created in 1994, ISLLC is a consortium of thirty-two education agencies and thirteen educational administration associations that have established an education policy framework for school leadership. In 1996, the consortium adopted ISLLC Standards for School Leaders. Currently, thirty-five states have either adopted or adapted the ISLLC Standards and are in different stages of implementing the standards in reforming educational leadership within their state. Standard 4 of the six standards states:

> A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 16)

In 1992, INTASC (a consortium of state education agencies, higher education institutions, and national education organizations) developed 10 principles that all teachers should master. According to Principle 10, teachers are expected to foster relationships with school colleagues, parents, and community agencies to support students' learning. NCATE emphasized in its standard for content knowledge that teacher candidates should understand principles and strategies for school, family, and community partnerships to support students' learning.

In restructuring schools for the 21st Century, plans must be made to include parents. As indicated in this paper, all parents must be a part of their children's educational program. If parents are unable to understand and support school activities in the target language, then programs to assist LEP parents in doing so must be established by school leaders. Many programs of this nature exist and can be found in evaluations of federally funded programs at the U.S. Department of Education. Other programs of this

type may be found on the Internet simply by conducting a search. Information is available to school leaders as they facilitate making parents feel a part of the school so that their children's social, emotional, and academic well-being can be enhanced.

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